The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news accounts and editorial interpretations of matters affecting labor unionism, to the American legislative and political fields, and contains other information of benefit to the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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WHOLE NO. 1511 WILLIAM GREEN, President WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 1940. GEORGE MEANY, Secretary-Treasurer VOL. 30, NO. 13

FACING the FACTS

With PHILIP PEARL

In its desperate efforts to cut in on the American Federation of Labor in the building industry, the CIO is now employing more despicable methods than hijackers or scabs.

Denny Lewis, carbon copy of his big brother John, appeared before the Building Trades Employers' Association of New York City with his hat in his hand and begged the employers for a pat on the head.

The CIO, he said, will supply workers for construction jobs in New York City at $9 a day, instead of the $11 to $14 a day rates prevailing for A. F. of L. skilled union members.

The CIO workers, Denny Lewis further promised, will put in eight hours a day, instead of the six or seven hour day enforced by the A. F. of L. Building Trades unions.

Here at last the CIO is publicly exposed as a scab organization willing to sell the workers down the river!

Here at last comes the shameless public confession that the CIO is willing to destroy wage and hour standards, built up by organized labor through long years of struggle and suffering, merely for the chance of hijacking the American Federation of Labor!

What has happened to all those lofty ideals spouted by CIO propagandists about organizing the unorganized in the face of such dastardly treachery to the workers?

Greeks Bearing Gifts

Naturally the employers didn't fall for this phony CIO offer. They are hard-headed enough to beware of the Greeks bearing gifts. According to the New York Times account of the CIO conference with the Association, the employers listened to Lewis' "with interest," but they asked no questions and entered into no discussion with him.

Furthermore, the New York Times says, a spokesman for the employers explained that the "weakness of Mr. Lewis' proposals was that there were only about twelve CIO building trades locals in the city, representing a small number of workers, and that until such time as the CIO was able to enlist a more impressive membership of building tradesmen, any proposals emanating from the CIO would remain largely academic."

We call that a wise prediction. Picture little Denny going around New York trying to induce carpenters, plumbers, bricklayers and electricians to go to work for less pay and longer hours. We can just about imagine the reception he will get. May we advise Denny that a scab is rather unpopular among union men who have been brought up under American Federation of Labor traditions?

But shame poor little Denny. He's just carrying out orders from the big boss, his brother. Denny may be the one to take the punishment, but John L. Lewis is the guilty party. He has become so blinded with insensate rage at his failure to make a dent in the solid ranks of the A. F. of L. membership that he is willing to go to any lengths now in revenge. He has shown now that he is ready and willing to betray the workers just to satisfy his own personal ambition.

A Constructive Step

In refreshing contrast to the activities of the CIO saboteurs, was the action taken at the New York State Building and Construction Trades Council of the American Federation of Labor.

At a conference called by President Thomas Murray, ways and means were discussed for organizing the small home construction field. Proposals were formulated for the adoption of a uniform wage to apply to such jobs only, not on large construction projects.

Since a secondary scale, such as $9 a day, would not represent a wage cut but it would bring about a considerable pay increase for workers on small home construction, most of whom are now unorganized and receive $5 or $6 a day. Therefore, it will be considered a forward step in raising standards and ending the employment of non-union and inefficient workmen by contractors in this field.

Further conferences will be held and the membership of the building trades unions will be consulted before any definite program is adopted along these lines.

Meanwhile, the building trades unions throughout the nation are preparing to intensify efforts to secure adoption of legislation which will continue and expand the Federal slum clearance program. The Wagner Bill, now pending in Congress, is fully supported by organized labor, and must be adopted if the U. S. Housing Authority is to continue operations. The U.S.H.A. has a working agreement with the A. F. of L. and employs only A. F. of L. building trades workers on its construction projects.

A Message to General Motors Workers!

(This is the second of a series of articles on the issues involved in the General Motors elections to be held April 17.)

In Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany elections are held from time to time to give the people the false idea that they have some voice in deciding national policies. But Stalin and Hitler take good care that the people have no choice in the elections. They can only vote "Yes."

The same system is enforced in that American dictatorship which masquerades as a labor organization—the CIO.

At its last convention in San Francisco many important issues had to be decided by the delegates. But they were only permitted to vote "Yes" to the resolutions presented by them by John L. Lewis and his associates who ran the convention. During the entire proceedings which lasted over a week, not a single "No" vote was recorded on any proposition.

The American Federation of Labor therefore asks the automobile workers employed by General Motors—do you want to be subjected to dictatorship? Do you want to surrender control of your union's policies to a dictator who will tell you when you may work and when you have to strike?

An example of how CIO dictatorship affects the pocketbooks of the workers is found in a case now pending before the National Labor Relations Board. It involves a runaway shop. This company for several years prior to 1937 had an agreement with the American Federation of Labor's Metal Polishers' Union which called for a wage rate of $1.10 an hour. To cut labor costs the company moved its plant to Adrian, Mich. It signed a closed shop agreement with a company union for a wage scale of 70 cents an hour. Shortly afterward, the CIO moved in and forced the dissolution of the company union. The same lawyer who did this job for the company then represented the CIO in wage negotiations which resulted in an agreement on a 45 cents an hour scale. This was less than even the company union scale and less than half of the rate formerly enjoyed by the A. F. of L. workers in the same company.

This sell-out cannot be dismissed as a single, unimportant incident unrelated to the CIO's regular policy. Proof that the CIO has adopted a definite, scab, wage-cutting policy is afforded by its present campaign to sell out building trades workers to employers.

In New York City, Denny Lewis, brother of John L. Lewis, has just made an offer to contractors to put men at work for $9 a day for an eight hour day on jobs now held by American Federation of Labor workers at $11 to $14 a day for a six or seven hour day.

If the CIO wins out in the General Motors elections, this same policy may be applied to automobile workers.

Therefore, the American Federation of Labor says to the automobile workers of General Motors, if you want your wage scales protected, if you are determined to improve your working and living standards, if you want to carve out a better life for yourselves and your families, you must vote on April 17 for the United Automobile Workers of America, A. F. of L., which guarantees you democratic control of your own union and the power to decide your own union policies.

EDITORIAL

Gompers of the South

The Atlanta Journal of Labor quietly observed its forty-sixth anniversary recently. No great fan-fare was created over the record of loyal and consistent service to the American Federation of Labor, just the usual corking good paper was issued.

Forty-six years ago, Samuel Gompers said to Jerome Jones, his personal representative in the South: "Jerome, the American Federation of Labor needs a labor paper in Atlanta to spread the gospel of "trade unionism." You are the best man I know to edit such a paper. Why don't you get started?" So, began the story of the foremost labor paper in the South. Jerome Jones founded the Journal of Labor and has been its sole editor from that time on.

The Journal of Labor is the official publication of the Atlanta Federation of Trades and the Georgia Federation of Labor. Mr. Jones is recognized as the dean of labor editors and is often referred to as "the Samuel Gompers of the South." He is past president of both the Atlanta trades and state federation and the city central body. His activities in the interest of organized labor cover more than half a century.

Mr. Green Replies to Pegler

(This is the first of a series of three articles by William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, replying to charges made against organized labor by Westbrook Pegler, newspaper columnist. The articles were prepared for publication in the newspapers which carry Mr. Pegler's columns. They are being reprinted here for sale in the labor press. In the first article which follows, Mr. Green answers the charge that unions are coercive and exact an income tax from workers in the form of dues.)

By WILLIAM GREEN
President, American Federation of Labor

The coercion argument against unions is actually an argument against the closed shop. Every intelligent person realizes that coercion of workers is not the object or general practice of the trade union movement. Organized labor was born out of suffering and oppression. It is an understatement to say unions were voluntary associations of workingmen. They were democratic associations. Workers joined together into unions because they found they were helpless as individuals to protect their own interests and obtain for just shares of the wealth they were producing. That was the only justification for labor unions in the beginning. It is their only justification now.

It is needless for me to recite the fearful conditions under which men were forced to labor and live in this country long before the establishment of unions. It requires no great exertion of memory to recall the tremendous economic, legislative and social progress effected by organized labor in the past thirty years. And conditions are far from perfect yet. Even today the Federal Government is experiencing serious difficulty in enforcing a minimum wage, maximum hour standards and maximum hour provisions for millions of unorganized workers.

The closed shop, or the union shop, is not a device to compel workers to join a union. It is a protective measure adopted by workers to prevent employers from destroying advantages gained by union organization. Union workers have established by their combined efforts high American standards of living and work. They refuse to work side-by-side with non-union men because they are determined to maintain and improve their working and living standards.

But Mr. Pegler says he is forced to be a member of his union to hold his job. It is easy to understand Mr. Pegler's feelings because he probably makes from $30,000 to $50,000 a year and he figures the union cannot help him a great deal. But how about the young newspaperman who is making $25 or $30 a week? How about the veteran newspaperman whose pay has been cut once, twice or three times? Surely, Mr. Pegler instead of feeling resentful because he is forced to join his union under a union shop contract with his employer, should try to help his fellow workers improve the standards of his profession and strengthen the union rather than destroy it. Perhaps Mr. Pegler cannot see that far ahead, but surely he should not begrudge it if it is being used to help uplift the standards of his fellow workers.

Mr. Pegler objects to the policies of his union. So do I. It is a CIO union and its policies are radical, to put it mildly. But there are a large number of unions operating in the CIO on the same way about these policies as Mr. Pegler. Why doesn't he join with them to reform these policies rather than condemn the union?

If members of a union are indifferent, then the union may naturally fail to be responsive to their needs. But if the members of a union take an active part in its affairs, as they should, they can make that union an organization as the majority wishes. The same principle holds true of government in our cities, States and nation.

When Mr. Pegler charges unions are coercive, my reply to him is—ask the carpenter, ask the bricklayer, ask the plumber, ask the railroad worker, ask the printer in the composing room of your own newspaper, and find out whether they are members of their union by choice or by coercion.

Now as to union dues. These dues are fixed by the members of the union. The money is used by officers to run the union. Vast amounts are paid out by unions each year for strike benefits. In 1938 unions affiliated with the A. F. of L. paid their members a total of $25,588,288.58 in death, sickness, old age, disability and unemployment benefits. These are worthy purposes for union activities.

When Mr. Pegler implies that union dues are exacted from workers to support a lot of labor leaders in idleness and luxury, he is repeating the same old charge that enemies of labor have made from time immemorial. It is untrue and the average organized labor leader knows it is untrue. Let me assure Mr. Pegler that the members of organized labor are not pusillanimous puppets but upstanding independent Americans. They know their union dues are a small investment in self-protection and security. In my experience in organized labor I have found that any official so untrue to his trust as to misapply union funds is promptly and effectively punished. I have found far fewer cases of this kind in labor unions than in any other kind of organization in the nation.

(The second article in this series will be published next week.)

Baffled Ambition Led Lewis to Break With Roosevelt, Says Magazine

Frustrated ambition impelled John L. Lewis to break with President Roosevelt, Herbert Harris declares in an illustrated article in the current issue of Look Magazine. Excerpts from the article follow:

"The reasons for John L. Lewis's break with the President can be found not in Machiavelli, but in Freud. They are not political but psychological.

"When, at Columbus, O., Lewis addressed his miners against supporting a third term, he committed three unpardonable sins of American politics.

"He failed to support the presidential candidate that he was sure to be licked.

"He laid himself open to charges of 'ingrate,' thus repudiated popular support from the Republicans.

"And he revealed, when the miners showed enthusiasm for a third term, the weakness of his trading position—his inability to deliver the votes of those he has led for 10 years.

"Lewis must know that—he is no tyro in politics. His behavior, then, can be understood only when it is seen that there have been three lewises: first, the early Lewis, harassed leader of the insurgents; the Lewis who rode high on the crest of the New Deal wave; and now—the Lewis who has tasted too much success, is misguidedly his trade unionist role for that of a prima donna.

"Lewis came [illegible] sus labor's cause with his p[illegible] sires. In the [illegible] led power that Roosevelt refu[illegible] to break with the Presid[illegible] dramatizes the clash of their wills.

"Lewis visited the White House three times before going to Columbus. He spurned the President's friendly overtures, wanted to control Democratic policy, refused to compromise with the A. F. L. Roosevelt had charged Lewis with responsibility for Labor's disunity. Lewis's subsequent peace offer to the A. F. of L. was propaganda. His anti-Roosevelt speech showed that today he considers himself a man of destiny first, a leader of labor second."

N. L. R. B. DECISIONS

Washington, D. C.—The National Labor Relations Board announced the following certifications of the American Federation of Labor unions:

Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America, affiliated with the A. F. of L., as the sole collective bargaining agency selected by a majority of the employees for the purpose of collective bargaining in a unit consisting of 105 to 85 in favor of the union.

The Board also announced the following elections for collective bargaining purposes which will be held within the next thirty days:

Among the production and maintenance employees in the Ingalls Shipbuilding Corporation, Pascagoula, Mississippi, to determine whether or not they desire to be represented by Metal Trades Department (AFL), for the purpose of collective bargaining.

Among hourly and piece-work employees in the production and maintenance departments of Henry Disston & Sons, Inc., Philadelphia, Pa., to determine whether they desire to be represented by Steel Workers Organizing Committee, Lodge 1073 (CIO); by United Saw, File, and Steel Products Workers of America, Local No. 22,254 (AFL); or by neither.

35-CENTS HOURLY WAGE SET FOR SHOE INDUSTRY

Washington, D. C.—A 35 cents an hour minimum wage for the shoe industry, increasing earnings of 40,000 employes, was ordered by the Wage-Hour Division, effective April 29.

The shoe industry is the fifth for which an order has been issued since the Wage-Hour Law became effective in October, 1938. Previously, orders in textiles, hosiery, millinery, knitted outerwear and knitted underwear industries.

The order may open the way for the second court test of the validity of the Wage-Hour Act because representatives of more than a score of St. Louis manufacturers have indicated they would refuse to accept validity of the order and that of the law itself.

A test of the Wage-Hour Law's constitutionality already has been started by Southern textile manufacturers and is pending in the United States Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans.

A shoe industry committee, composed of employing employes and representatives of the public, voted the 35-cent minimum unanimously.

News Briefs

DIES CALLS C.I.O. UNIONS FALSE FRONTS FOR REDS

Chicago, Ill.—Subversive groups are still active in this country, although they are working under false fronts, Rep. Martin Dies warned in an address here.

The chairman of the House Investigating Committee which has been investigating Reds and Nazis declared that at least eleven CIO unions are controlled or dominated by Communists. He also named the International Labor Defense as organizations allied with the Communist Party.

A. F. L. MEMBERS IN N. Y. TOP C.I.O. TOTAL IN U. S.

New York, N. Y.—The dues-paying membership of American Federation of Labor unions in New York State exceeded by the National Labor Relations Board as the sole collective bargaining agency for employes of the Greyhound Lines, Inc., Cleveland, Ohio, to cease discriminating against the Brotherhood.

Bus drivers for the Ohio Greyhound will vote within thirty days as to whether they wish to be represented by the Amalgamated or by the Brotherhood.

BROADCASTERS MUST NOT BAR LABOR FROM THE AIR

Washington, D. C.—The National Association of Broadcasters notified Congressional committees that it will deny facilities to a labor leader or organizer solely because the program is "highly offensive" or "insulting" or "treading on dangerous ground."

The association, in a review of its code, said that "no broadcaster, of course, would permit his facilities to be used to incite riot or bloodshed."

"On the other hand," it stated, "the opinion of an employer that a labor program dealing with his employes would be "dangerous" should be considered for just what it is worth."

Refusal of an employer to participate in strike discussions, it added, was not just reason to dispel for refusing broadcasting time to a labor leader.

LADIES GARMENT WORKERS CONVENTION OPENS MAY 27

New York, N. Y.—The General Executive Board of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, under the signature of President David Dubinsky, issued a call for the twenty-fourth convention of the union to open in New York City on May 27 and continue in session two weeks.

Constructive Amendments to Labor Relations Act Are Now Probable

HELP FUND TO FIGHT VICIOUS OREGON LAW

Washington, D. C.—An appeal to national and international unions to assist in the court fight against the legality of the Oregon anti-labor law was issued by President William Green of the American Federation of Labor.

This law was originated by hostile employers and adopted by a referendum vote in Oregon. The fight to have the law declared unconstitutional has now been carried to the Oregon Supreme Court. The litigation has cost the Oregon State Federation and the A. F. of L. substantial sums of money.

In response to a request from the State Federation, the Executive Council last February decided that affiliated organizations be asked to contribute to the cost of carrying on this litigation.

Pointing out that the law limits the legitimate operations of organized labor in Oregon and that similar legislation has been defeated in other States, Mr. Green said in a circular letter:

"I am appealing to national and international unions to contribute as generously as possible to a fund to be used in carrying on the fight against the Oregon Anti-Labor Law. This is an important case affecting all national and international unions. We hope and trust that we may secure a favorable decision declaring the Oregon Anti-Labor Law unconstitutional."

"Send all contributions to George Meany, Secretary-Treasurer of the American Federation of Labor, Washington, D. C."

OPERATORS ON 78 SHIPS ELECT A. F. L. AFFILIATE

New York, N. Y.—The Marine Division of the Commercial Telegraphers Union, an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor, announced that radio operators on seventy-eight American vessels had selected the union as its collective bargaining agent in one of the largest secret elections held by the National Labor Relations Board.

In a vote on thirty-seven vessels of the Socony Vacuum Oil Company thirty-seven radio operators were eligible to vote and thirty-four votes were cast, twenty of these in favor of the C. T. U. and seven for the American Communications Association, an affiliate of the CIO. Votes for neither union and one vote was challenged and not counted.

Twenty-four votes on as many ships of the Isthmian Line also were ruled eligible to vote and of these twenty-three cast ballots for the C. T. U. affiliate, two votes going to the A. C. A. Due to the long voyages of these ships votes making the vote took nine months.

In another election on fourteen ships of the Seas Shipping Co. eleven eligible voters named the C. T. U., one voted for the A. C. A. and three for neither union.

MINIMUM PAY FIXED FOR N Y RESTAURANTS

New York, N. Y.—An order setting 20 and 30 cents an hour as minimum wages for a week of 54 to 48 hours, affecting 50,000 women and girls employed in restaurants in New York State, will go into effect June 3, it was announced by Miss Frieda S. Miller, State Industrial Commissioner.

The specified minimum wages are in addition to tips, meals and uniforms. Waitresses are to get no less than 20 cents an hour, with employes receiving more than $15 tip[illegible] getting a minimum of 30 cents.

BARUCH OPPOSES CUT IN WORK RELIEF FUND

Washington, D. C.—Bernard M. Baruch, New York financier, in a letter to Senator Wagner of New York opposed the $30,000,000 Woodrum Bill sponsored by Mr. Wagner and Senator George, characterized as "inhuman" proposed cuts in work relief funds which would require the discharge of approximately 600,000 relief workers during the next year.

"It seems to me inhuman," Mr. Baruch said, "that people should be laid off from relief work when other jobs are not available to them. We have not seen anything done to relieve the situation—that is, to provide jobs—and I think it is a simple matter."

STOVE MOUNTERS WIN

Washington, D. C.—The National Labor Relations Board directed Chambers Corporation, Shelbyville, Indiana, to disestablish an Employees Welfare Association as a collective bargaining representative for any of its employees and to bargain collectively with Allied Stove Mounters and Stove Processors International Union, Local No. 38 (AFL), as the exclusive representative of its employes.

ECONOMIES CUT COST OF LOW-RENT HOUSING

Washington, D. C.—The share of the United States Government in the Federal slum clearance and low-rent housing program has been reduced by economies effected in operating expenses to an average net cost of $18 a room, or $1,250 a family, for every person living or about to live in new houses constructed under United States Housing Authority projects, according to figures made public by Nathan Straus, Administrator.

In emphasizing the large demand for slum clearance work Mr. Straus said the $800,000,000 proposed for additional U. S. Housing Authority loans in the bill, reported favorably to the House, would fall $200,000,000 short of filling loan requests on hand.

SCHEME TO EVADE JOB INSURANCE RULED OUT

Albany, N. Y.—The State Unemployment Appeal Board handed down a decision that an employer cannot evade payments to the State Unemployment Insurance Fund by forming a nominal partnership with his employes.

In the case which resulted in the ruling the employer had formed a "partnership" with several of his employes, although none of them invested money in the business. The "partners" then drew periodical payments which were based on their previous wages or salaries. When the "partnership" was later dissolved, no accounting was rendered to the workers and none of them participated in the assets, the Appeal Board said.

According to the board's opinion this was an "ingenious attempt to destroy the relationship of employer and employe" conceived by the employer with a view to evade normal contributions to the fund.

JOBLESS TAX RATING HIT BY A. F. OF L. CHIEF

New York, N. Y.—Thomas Murtha, president of the Central Trades and Labor Council of Greater New York, speaking on behalf of 600,000 American Federation of Labor members in New York City, opposed the proposal to institute "experienced rating" under the unemployment insurance law. According to the plan companies offering constant employment would pay lower unemployment insurance taxes than companies with a higher turnover. Mr. Murtha criticized this as arbitrary and said it would be a scheme for the unemployment insurance fund.

Part of the income were excessive in relation to the need for it, tax reductions could be justified, but the plan "benefits only the employer of any such notion," Mr. Murtha said.

"Not to beat about the bush, the benefits paid under the unemployment insurance law of our State are pitifully inadequate to provide reasonably for unemployed workers during the time when they are out of work."

A. F. L. MEMBERS IN N. Y. TOP C.I.O. TOTAL IN U. S.

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LABOR BOARD CERTIFIES A. F. L. MINE WORKERS

Washington, D. C.—The Progressive Mine Workers of America, affiliated with the A. F. of L., was another bitterly contested election against the CIO United Mine Workers and was certified by the National Labor Relations Board as the sole collective bargaining agency for employes of the Pittsburgh Coal Company in Pennsylvania, it was announced by Miss Frieda S. Miller, State Industrial Commissioner.

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NLRB DENIES FREE SPEECH TO GREYHOUND BUS LINES

Washington, D. C.—Further justification for "free speech" amendments to the National Labor Relations Act was forthcoming in the Labor Board's latest decision affecting the Greyhound Bus Lines.

The Board found that Greyhound officials had indicated a preference for the Amalgamated Street and Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employes of America (A. F. of L.) over the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen. This finding was based on a statement by counsel for the company at a meeting with employes that the company would "accept legislative favorable to railroads and detrimental to motorbus transportation."

Chairman Fish mere statement was an interference with employe rights to self-organization, the Board issued an order requiring the Ohio Greyhound Lines, Chicago, Ill., and the Cleveland Greyhound Lines, Cleveland, Ohio, to cease discriminating against the Brotherhood.

Roosevelt Said to Favor 5-Man Board; House Unit Cuts NLRB Budget, Axes Sapose' Division.

Washington, D. C.—Demand for constructive amendments to the National Labor Relations Act was spurred by three outstanding developments during the week:

1. Disclosure that President Roosevelt has become dissatisfied with the present make-up of the National Labor Relations Board and is willing to go along with an amendment calling for a five-man board.

2. Charges that the NLRB suppressed a report prepared by four of its own regional directors criticizing its administrative setup and particularly the "bottle-neck" existing in the office of Nathan Witt, Board secretary.

3. Allegations by Trial Examiner Mapes Davidson, in resigning, that Board members "continue brazenly and openly to foster Communists and kindred radicals."

4. Action by the House Appropriations Committee in applying the axe to the NLRB budget and eliminating appropriations for the Board's Economics Division, headed by David Saposs, anti-A. F. of L. radical who denies he is a Communist.

American Federation of Labor officials indicated they would prefer the direct method of amendments to the National Labor Relations Act, rather than the indirect approach of starving the Board, in seeking to correct NLRB maladministration.

White House support for changes in NLRB personnel was seen in Senator Wagner's open advocacy of an amendment increasing the membership of the Board to five.

Such an amendment was approved by the House Labor Committee which is still considering additional changes suggested by the American Federation of Labor and others.

Washington observers reported that the position taken by Senator Wagner and the House Labor Committee reflected the changed attitude of President Roosevelt toward amendments of the NLRB.

The charges of Mr. Davidson and the revelations that the NLRB had suppressed a report criticizing its own administration caused something of a sensation in Congress.

According to informed observers, there is a growing Congressional sentiment in the House of Representatives for immediate and constructive amendment of the Act. It is expected that the House will speed up action on amendments in response to this sentiment. Chances for adoption of amendments by the Senate at this session are also considered good.

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